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ADEQ Director Owens Announces \$250,000 Grant to Restore Waters Damaged by 2002 Rodeo-Chediski Fire

PHOENIX (July 18, 2008) -- Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Director Steve Owens announced today that ADEQ is awarding a \$250,000 grant to the White Mountain Apache Tribe to reverse damage done to watersheds by the 2002 Rodeo-Chediski fire.

The wildfire, the largest in Arizona history, burned nearly 500,000 acres of forest land, including a substantial area on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation in east-central Arizona. Flooding because of erosion caused by the fire is still occurring in the community of Cibecue and throughout the western part of the reservation, and is damaging homes, roads and land throughout the region.

“The Rodeo-Chediski fire was the most devastating fire in our state’s history, and its impact is still being felt throughout the Apache reservation and northeastern Arizona,” Director Owens. “We have been working closely with the White Mountain Apache Tribe to deal with the consequences of the Rodeo-Chediski fire and protect precious water resources in the area. This is one of the most important water quality improvement grants we are providing this year.”

The grant will help Cibecue, a community about 50 miles southwest of Show Low with a population of about 2,000 people, implement management practices to protect the land and water. The grant focuses on the Willow Creek drainage area in the Salt Creek watershed and the Day School Wash drainage area, located within the Cibecue Creek watershed.

Under the grant, the tribe will plant seedlings and native vegetation and install dams and dikes in areas where erosion is occurring. The tribe also will use the grant money to build fences and widen channels to reduce flood risk, erosion and bacteria levels.

In addition, the tribe will conduct follow-up monitoring to measure the water quality and to better determine the sources of erosion. It also will conduct outreach and public educational programs to boost awareness of water quality, fire and health issues.

Work under the grant will be performed under the White Mountain Apache Tribe’s authority and will include the efforts of contractors and volunteers.